

# Meth Lab Fact Sheet

## **What is meth?**

Methamphetamine, or meth, is a highly toxic, powerful central nervous system stimulant with a potential to become an addictive drug. Some of its street names include crank, crystal, speed, chalk, glass, and ice. It can be smoked, snorted, injected, or ingested. Manufacturing, distributing, or possessing meth is illegal.

## **What are the effects of meth?**

The abnormal release of chemicals in the brain associated with feelings of well-being cause meth's rush. But when the drug wears off, these brain chemicals are so low that meth users eventually become incapable of feeling good, happy, or experiencing any pleasure without taking more meth. And the amount of meth they need to feel pleasure increases over time, so that even large doses of meth produce insignificant highs.

Some of the effects of meth on users include agitation, excited or impaired speech, decreased appetites, hyperactivity, paranoia, hallucinations, heightened sexual activity, sudden and violent behavior, acne and sores on the skin, severe depression, memory loss, increased heart rate and body temperature, sleep deprivation, convulsions, seizures, stroke, and death.

## **What is an illegal meth lab?**

An illegal drug lab can be set up using common household equipment and chemicals. The different ways of making meth can involve explosives, solvents, metals, salts, and corrosives. Meth labs have been found in homes, sheds, barns, motel and hotel rooms, outside in the woods, and in car trunks. Manufacturing or "cooking" meth can leave behind large amounts of toxic waste.

## **What are the dangers of an illegal meth lab?**

Toxic chemical fumes, spills, explosions, and fires make illegal drug labs dangerous places. Meth cooks, their family members, and first responders are often the ones who are injured (or worse) in illegal drug labs. Waste dumped from drug labs can expose people to toxic chemicals. People picking up litter on the side of a road have been injured from drug lab waste dumps.

Exposures to high levels of contaminants found in drug labs can cause shortness of breath, cough, chest pain, dizziness, lack of coordination, chemical irritation, and burns to the skin, eyes, mouth and nose, and in severe cases, death. Symptoms such as headache, nausea, dizziness, and fatigue have occurred in people who entered a drug lab after the bust was completed, but before the property was properly cleaned and ventilated. If you experience any of these symptoms, contact your health care provider.

Not much is known about the long-term health effects from these labs. Long-term exposure to drug labs is a big concern, especially for children living in a very contaminated environment. However, there is scientific evidence from animal and human toxicity studies that shows the chemicals used in the manufacture of meth can cause a range of health effects. These include cancer, damage to the brain, liver and kidneys, birth defects, and reproductive problems, such as miscarriages.

### **What are some signs that might indicate a drug lab?**

Alone, these activities or signs may not mean that illegal drug activity is occurring. However, some or several of them happening together may indicate a problem.

- Strong chemical odor coming from house, garbage, or detached building.
- Visitors come and go throughout the day and night and stay for short periods of time.
- Extra efforts to cover windows or have extensive security, such as reinforced doors.
- Deterioration of property and excessive amounts of trash, such as large amounts of antifreeze, drain cleaner, and glass containers.
- Appear to have plenty of money but don't seem to go to work - drive expensive cars, pay rent or bills with cash.
- Never take trash out to be collected or put garbage in another neighbor's collection area.
- Residents come outside to smoke cigarettes.
- Children and pets of the home appear to be neglected.
- Residents act unfriendly, paranoid, or appear secretive about their activities.

If you suspect illegal drug lab activity is occurring, contact your local law enforcement agency.

### **What can landlords and owners of motels do to prevent drug labs on their property?**

- Property owners and landlords can conduct background checks on potential tenants and visit their property regularly. Motel and hotel owners and managers need to be aware of guests that pay with cash, are local residents, and appear to be using drugs.

### **What are some recommendations for a house or property that has been contaminated by a drug lab?**

- No one should enter a place that has been used as an illegal drug lab without appropriate personal protective equipment unless the area has been ventilated and decontaminated.
- No one should rent, purchase, or otherwise occupy a house or dwelling which has been used as an illegal drug lab until the property has been decontaminated.
- Knowledge of whether or not a property has been decontaminated should be considered when deciding to rent, purchase, or occupy a property which has been used as a drug lab. No decontamination procedure can guarantee absolute safety for re-occupancy.